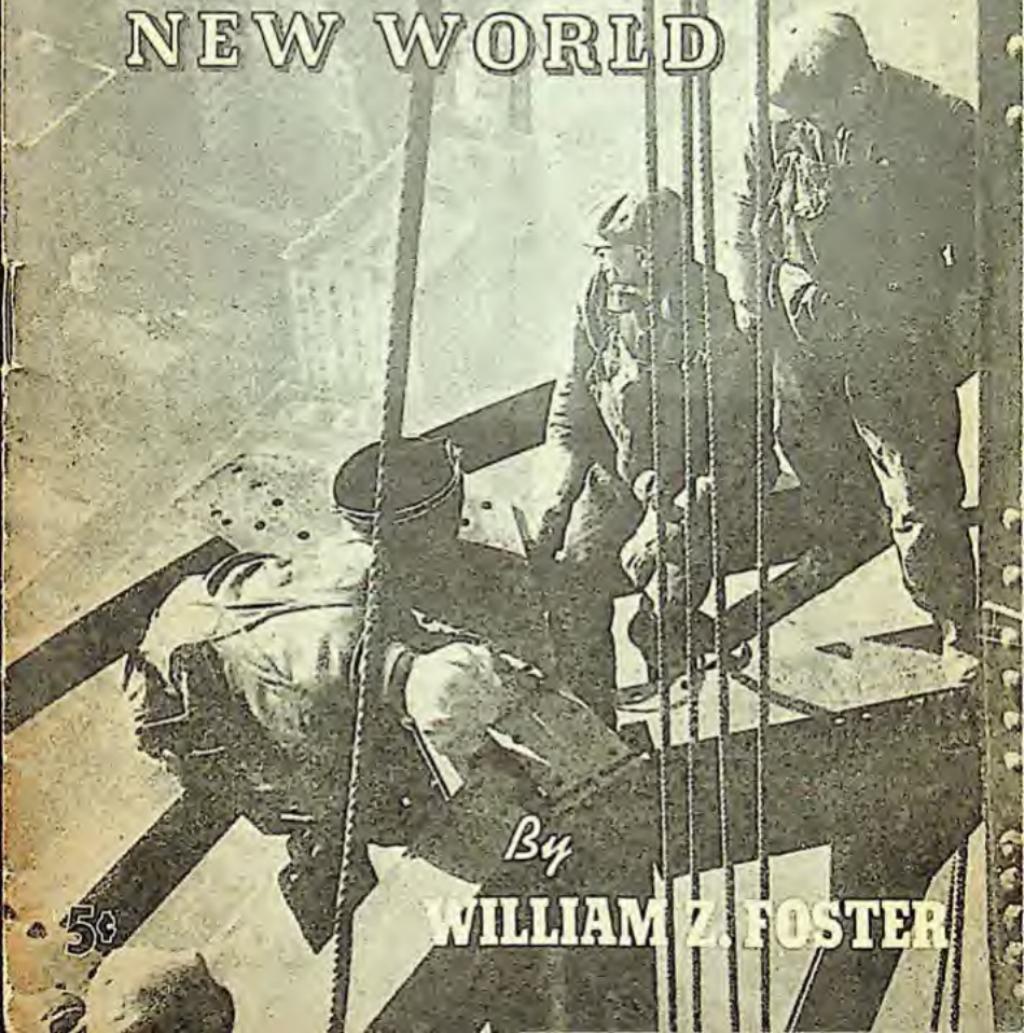


ORGANIZED LABOR

Faces the

NEW WORLD



By

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

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NOTE

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Labor's New Situation

In the more than fifty years since the first strike in which I participated, that of the Philadelphia street carmen in December, 1894, the American trade union movement has made tremendous progress. In those early days, and indeed right up until only half a dozen years or so ago, the unions were fighting desperately to build their organizations and to establish their right to live. The rich, powerful and stiff-necked capitalists resisted the workers' demand for organization, almost to the point of small-scale civil war. In few countries were strikes so violently combatted by employers as in the United States. With the Government, the courts and the armed forces at their disposal, the employers used every means to prevent the workers from organizing to better their economic conditions. Their slogan was the "open shop," and they sought to check the growth of unionism by spy systems, gunmen, blacklist, and organized terrorism. Thousands of workers were murdered and millions underwent severe hardships in the long struggle to improve their conditions and to build the American labor movement.

Now, however, the trade unions, particularly during the Roosevelt Administration, find themselves in quite a new situation. The two great objectives, organization and recognition, for which the unions fought so long and resolutely have been very largely achieved. Since the days of my first strike in 1894, the population of the country has just about doubled, but the membership of the trade unions has increased almost fifty times over—that is, from less

than 300,000 to almost 14,000,000. Moreover, the unions are now widely recognized even by the biggest employers, whose great "open shop" industries of earlier years have been organized, while the Government has written into law the workers' elementary rights to organize. This does not ignore the facts that there are still many millions of workers unorganized and that in various respects the unions are still not recognized by the employers and the Government.

Organized labor, with its two major objectives of yesteryear—organization and recognition—well on the way towards accomplishment, however, finds itself confronted by new tasks. The unions are by no means in a position to rest on their oars and take things easy. On the contrary, labor's new status is one of great political responsibility and also of unparalleled opportunity. It puts upon the unions the heaviest and most complicated tasks in their history, with an urgent need for the highest type of leadership.

Today the peoples of the world, beating back the murderous attempt of the fascist states to enslave humanity, face problems—military, economic, political, social—of unprecedented magnitude. To solve these problems and to keep the world from sinking into chaos, the utmost activity of organized labor is required, especially here in the United States. In the historic wartime conferences of Moscow, Teheran and Crimea, the leaders of the three greatest powers of the United Nations, President Roosevelt, Marshal Stalin and Prime Minister Churchill, laid down the free peoples' program for winning the war, for eradicating fascism, for establishing a solid post-war organization to maintain world peace, and for the rehabilitation of the war-ravaged world upon the basis of an expanding economy.

The future of civilization depends upon these great objectives being reached. And their realization, in turn, will depend decisively upon the extent to which the trade unions throughout the United Nations give them active support. Organized labor is the very backbone of the present stupendous efforts of the democratic peoples to defeat fascism and to build a

free, peaceful and prosperous world. Just today, in the *New York Times*, Senator Claude Pepper of Florida is quoted as saying: "We will not have Dumbarton Oaks or Bretton Woods unless labor mobilizes its strength and fights for these things." He might have added also that without the support of organized labor the whole program of the United Nations will not be achieved.

Defeat the Reactionary Opposition

In these war days organized labor in the United States has numerous urgent tasks, including the maintenance of production at the highest possible levels, the honoring of its no-strike pledge, and many others. And with these, it must also be particularly conscious of the major responsibility, flowing out of its great strength, namely, to help defeat the opposition in this country to the whole victory program that is summed up in the decisions of the Crimean Conference. In this fight the trade unions must be close and active collaborators with all other groups of the population who are supporting the policies of the Roosevelt Administration against the powerful opposition.*

All through this war period the American people have had to contend with such unpatriotic, fascist-minded opposition elements. These forces have exploited the war for profiteering purposes; they have tried to soften the blow against Hitler; they have opposed the slogan of "unconditional surrender" and have sought a negotiated peace. During the recent elections the same forces, under the leadership of Dewey, made a desperate effort to seize control of our national Government. Now they are concentrating their efforts upon defeating or emasculating the Dumbarton Oaks proposals for a post-war peace organization that are to be acted upon by the United Nations at San Francisco. They are also trying to cut the heart of the Bretton Woods financial plans for world economic reconstruction. And, as they go on with these current fights,

* This speech was made before the death of President Roosevelt.

their Republican Party is preparing for a determined attempt to secure a majority of Congress in the Fall election of 1946.

This stubborn opposition to the Crimean program is made up of fascist-minded big business men, union busters, Negro haters, anti-Semites, Soviet baiters, native fascists and the like. The opposition is typified by such names as those of Hoover, Taft, Vandenberg, Dewey, Wheeler, Rankin, Dies, Hearst, McCormick, etc. As against the progressive Roosevelt pro-Crimea policies of international collaboration, the reactionary opposition stands for a program of militant American imperialist expansion. Seeing the United States' great economic, political and military strength, they would exploit that strength by trying to develop American domination over the war-torn world. Such imperialist ambitions are evident in all the struggle of the reactionary opposition, in their pro-Hitler sympathies, in their attempts to set up a weak post-war world organization which would give the reactionaries of the United States a free hand for imperialist maneuvers, in their efforts to distort the Bretton Woods proposals so as to permit of American imperialist world financial dictation.

This imperialist program could only lead to economic disaster, nationally and internationally. It would ruin the American people's needful 60,000,000 job program; it would threaten the existence of the labor movement, it would raise a real danger of fascism in the United States; it would start the world towards a new and still more devastating war. Hence, this reactionary opposition, which has great wealth and a huge press behind it, must be finally defeated. The crushing of Hitler Germany is a mighty blow against America's reactionaries; the defeat of Dewey in the elections was also a great setback for them. But they must be whipped altogether—in the present fight around Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods, in the 1946 election, and whenever and wherever they may raise their heads. The defeat of the powerful reactionary opposition in this country is a fundamental condition for the realization of the great program outlined at the Crimean Conference. Organized labor, by alert and aggressive

political action, must furnish the main section of the broad national democratic coalition necessary to bring about this victory.

After the defeat of Germany and Japan the most powerful reactionary forces will be found in the U. S. The militant imperialist forces in this country will try to rally the reactionary elements everywhere against the whole democratic program symbolized by Crimea. This places a double responsibility upon the labor and progressive forces in the United States, to defeat and break up this reactionary combination.

Consolidate National Unity

Beyond question, a large majority of the American people stand behind the Roosevelt policies and the general program that was laid down at the Crimean Conference. But this majority needs organization to effectively carry out the tremendous work of war reconstruction before it, and in order to defeat the reactionaries wherever they may make a stand. It cannot remain the loose conglomeration of progressive forces that it has been up to the present time. Organized labor, in line with its general political responsibility, must take an active and leading part in this consolidation of our national unity. Among the more important steps necessary in this direction, especially going towards linking labor up with other progressive groups, are the following:

a. Organized labor must unite its own ranks. Organic unity between the C.I.O. and the A. F. of L. is of very great importance and every effort must be bent towards that end, but the workers cannot wait until such complete unity is achieved. They must find the means for the main sections of the labor movement to work together, despite the split between them. Ample experience during the war has shown this to be quite feasible, for upon innumerable war boards A. F. of L. and C.I.O. leaders are working harmoniously. In elections and in movements for or against certain pieces of legislation the A. F. of L., C.I.O. and Railroad Brotherhoods are also to be found in active cooperation. Such collaboration must be vastly ex-

tended and intensified. It will be a long step towards full trade union unity, and it is a fundamental necessity for strengthening the democratic coalition supporting the Roosevelt policies.

b. Another vital phase of buttressing national unity is for the trade unions to establish the closest cooperation with the Negro people. Important progress has been made in this respect, especially by the C.I.O., some 800,000 Negroes now being members of trade unions. But very much more remains to be done. Anti-Negro discrimination must be broken down in A. F. of L. unions, Negroes must be freely elected to trade union posts, seniority concessions must be made to them in order to protect their newly-won position in industry. The trade unions should become the ardent champions of the economic, political and social rights of the Negro people in every walk of life.

c. Close cooperation between organized labor and the ex-servicemen's organizations is also a fundamental necessity for full American support to the Crimean decisions. If the labor unions and the veterans' organizations work shoulder-to-shoulder from now on into the post-war period, democracy will be safe in the United States and America's role in the world will be a progressive one. But if the reactionaries should be able to drive a wedge between labor and the veterans, as they are now trying desperately to do, it would result in a perilous situation. Labor should, therefore maintain firm contact with the men and women in the armed forces now, and, when they come back to civilian life, see to it that they have jobs and full protection for their rights. Worker-veteran cooperation will be the most basic necessity of our political life during the post-war period.

d. A further vital essential for strengthening national unity is a much closer cooperation between the organized workers and the people in the agricultural areas. In the recent Presidential elections, when reaction made a determined effort to capture Congress and the Presidency, a large proportion of the votes for Mr. Dewey and his colleagues came from the agrarian states and from the rural sections of the industrial

states. This represents a very dangerous situation, and organized labor should spare no pains in order to improve it. Among the urgent measures necessary to draw the agricultural population more solidly into the democratic coalition are for the unions to carry on an energetic campaign to organize the workers employed in small towns and on the farms, and to enter into closer cooperative relations with the farmers' organizations on the basis of their mutual interests. Organized labor cannot afford to neglect the crucial matter of breaking the influence of the reactionaries in the agricultural areas of our country.

e. Organized labor must also be prepared to cooperate with those important and growing sections of the capitalists who are supporting the domestic policies of the present Administration and the Crimean Conference. The employers are by no means all in the camp of political reaction, and the trade unions need to be alert to cooperate with those capitalists who understand that the only way to avoid chaos is along the lines laid down in the Crimean Conference.

f. The trade unions have need, too, to cooperate politically with the many other progressive organizations and movements of women, youth, professionals, national groups, etc. Such cooperation, necessary for national unity, can be achieved on the basis of the nation's domestic and foreign objectives and the specific interests of the several movements concerned.

To carry out these vital objectives, the trade unions should set up a whole series of political action committees, much as they did during the recent national elections, to mobilize their membership for political action. These committees should link up the A. F. of L., the C.I.O., the Railroad Brotherhoods, and the United Mine Workers, and they should likewise establish connections with all the other groups and movements listed above.

This network of committees, and the rank and file of the unions generally, must become highly active politically. They should keep close track of all legislation pending in the local, state and national legislative bodies and make the voice of the people heard in these matters. They should also pay the closest

attention to the municipal, state-wide and national elections, see to it that the proper candidates are nominated and that the people turn out en masse and elect them.

Finally, the trade unions must base their political activities upon the non-partisan principle. That is, they must give their political support to legislation and candidates upon the grounds of issues and men, rather than upon mere loyalty to one or the other of the two big parties. They must learn to cooperate skillfully with the progressive minority in the Republican Party as well as with the progressive majority in the Democratic Party. The unions should especially be on guard against being drawn into untimely third party movements, advocated by such people as Norman Thomas, Walter Reuther, and the Trotskyites, as these would isolate them from the democratic masses of the people, who follow the lead of the two old parties.

The basic function of the trade unions continues to be the protection of the economic interests of the workers, and this they must never lose sight of. But in our war-devastated world the trade unions, of necessity, must perform many new political functions, upon the accomplishment of which the fate of the working class and the whole nation depends. Therefore, the old-time notions that there should be no politics in the unions must be eradicated, especially from the A. F. of L. unions. The workers should realize that the labor movement has entered upon a higher stage, the political, and they should become fully conscious of their new national and international political tasks.

Responsibilities and Representation

Among the new tasks of the trade unions some of the most basic have to do with the changed relations towards industry and the employers. From now on the workers will have to make a far more extensive and effective intervention in the processes of production than they have ever done before. The day is past when the employers can run their industries as they see fit. Now the Government, the people, the trade union

movement, must have a strong voice in this matter, so vital to the welfare of the nation.*

One of the most important of labor's new attitudes towards industry is the need to see to it, along with other progressive forces, that there shall be no economic smashup and mass unemployment after this war and make certain that full production and full employment are achieved in the post-war period. The Roosevelt New Economic Bill of Rights must be realized. The unions should, therefore, be ardent supporters of the Roosevelt 60,000,000 job program, in both its foreign and domestic aspects. The unions must boldly demand the workers' right to work and set as their goal the complete abolition of poverty in our country. They should insist upon a rapid rise in the living standards of the workers as indispensable for keeping our industrial system going. They should insist, too, upon shorter hours of work, a guaranteed annual wage, radically improved safety and health measures, and a complete system of social insurance. No longer can the American people, and the workers in particular, permit employers to shut down their plants recklessly, to exploit their workers mercilessly, and generally to act as industrial czars as they have done for so long. Furthermore, while accepting the system of private ownership of industry, the workers should realize that such privately owned industry must be supplemented by Government works if devastating economic crises are to be avoided.

In order to carry out these additional tasks in industry labor has to adopt corresponding new responsibilities towards production itself. For one thing, having won the right of seniority, it must see to it that the jobs are distributed justly. This will require special attention to the rights of Negroes.

* Since this speech was made, the A. F. of L., C.I.O. and United States Chamber of Commerce have jointly announced a "New Charter for Labor and Management," including a number of the points here discussed regarding new relations between workers and employers in industry. Labor should give active support to this Charter as a potent means for the realization of the general program of bettering the worker's life.

women, ex-servicemen and other newcomers in industry. The unions also will have to assume added responsibility for continuous production and for the improvement of industrial processes.

This will necessitate new relationships with the employers, especially with regard to reducing the number of strikes so far as practicable. In establishing such cooperative relations with employers, however, the trade unions must not fall into the errors of the 1920's when they became reduced to hardly more than speed-up agencies for profit-hungry employers. The unions must constantly keep before their eyes the need of the most rapid improvement of the workers' conditions in the history of our country and be alert, strong and aggressive in its realization. Such an improvement is necessary, not only in the interest of the workers, but of the entire nation's prosperity. For only if the purchasing power of the masses is raised can the industries be kept in operation.

To meet this new and heavy obligation regarding production, the trade unions must acquire a much stronger voice in industry than heretofore. The "labor-management" committees established during this war are only a step in this direction that labor must travel in winning a voice in industrial management. The unions must also be especially vigilant to secure adequate and responsible representation in all Government bodies relating in any way to the management or control or expansion of production.

Besides these new responsibilities in industry, organized labor also must take on new and great responsibilities in Government. Only if labor is fully represented in the local, state and national governments can the unions adequately discharge the tasks placed upon them by virtue of their own strength and the tremendous problems facing our country and the world. An end must be put to the present situation where the workers, who make up such a large percentage of our population, are virtually without political representation in the various legislative assemblies and other governmental bodies.

Organized labor must insist, then, upon full political recog-

nition in the great democratic coalition that stands behind the President and the whole Crimea program. This recognition is a national necessity, for only if labor is well represented politically can it exert its full democratic power for the national program. Labor and its proposals must be given consideration when it comes to making up election slates and platforms, labor men and women should be included in the various committees making up the war and post-war Administration machinery and also given high leading posts, and trade unionists should be brought into the President's Cabinet. Labor has come of age in the United States, and this must reflect itself by full labor representation in every phase of Government.

A further major responsibility of organized labor in this and all other democratic countries is to unite its forces internationally and to throw its gigantic strength behind a realization of the great program of the United Nations, the latest expression of which are the decisions of the Crimea Conference of the "Big Three" powers. World labor's full and united strength is indispensable for driving the war through to complete victory; for uprooting fascism entirely, and for the reestablishment of democracy, including the rebuilding of the trade unions in the liberated countries; for bringing about the punishment of fascist war criminals; for relieving the distress of the impoverished peoples and the rebuilding of their war-shattered industries; for the industrialization of the backward nations; for the systematic development of foreign trade; for the improvement of world labor standards; and for the thousand and one other urgent international problems growing out of the present complicated and difficult world situation.

The great World Trade Union Conference held in London in February, 1945, representing 60,000,000 workers from 40 nations, is the instrument that the workers of the world are creating for the accomplishment of all the foregoing vital international tasks. This huge body is now in the process of consolidating itself into a world federation of labor which

will supersede the half-dead International Federation of Trade Unions. The new world labor federation must become the steel structure of the whole United Nations organization. American labor—A. F. of L., C.I.O., Railroad Brotherhoods and United Mine Workers—are duty bound to affiliate with the new world federation of labor. The workers of this country must understand that just as our Government cannot pursue a policy of isolationism but must work with other Governments for a sane organization of the world, so also the American trade unions must practice full cooperation with the labor organizations of all other countries. The interests of the unions demand this, and so do those of the whole American nation.

The new world labor organization, born in London, has a program dove-tailing with that of the United Nations. In order to mobilize the workers of the world behind this common program, it is necessary, therefore, that the world labor organization be represented from top to bottom in the peace conference at the end of the war, in the San Francisco Conference on April 25, and in all other conferences and commissions of the United Nations having anything whatever to do with the prosecution of the war and the organization of the peace. World organized labor must be recognized as fundamental to the success of the United Nations, hence the trade unions of the United States should give this demand for representation their fullest support.

The Weakest Spot in American Labor

The overwhelming masses of the American working class are heartily in favor of the decisions of the Crimean Conference and the specific program advocated by Roosevelt. They want the war driven to complete victory, the extermination of fascism, the strengthening of world democracy, the establishment of a solid post-war world organization, and the development of an international economic program. And they are ready to take the steps necessary to accomplish these great ends.

The C.I.O. is completely in line with these needs and

wishes of the masses. It is capably led by Philip Murray, and the foregoing statement of necessary tasks could almost be taken as an outline of existing C.I.O. policy. The great bulk of the A. F. of L. unions (like those of the independent Miners and Railroad Workers) are also in general agreement with these policies. But the great weak spot is to be found in the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. Here is the main danger point in organized labor, and it is to this danger that I am going to address myself.

During the war the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. (unlike the defeatist John L. Lewis) has given general support to the national war effort; nevertheless, it is responsible for many policies which are distinctly harmful to labor's and the nation's interests, and which, if uncorrected, could be disastrous in the future.

On the 15-man Executive Council there are a number of progressives of a sort. The best is Dan Tobin, head of the giant Teamsters Union, with such men as Harvey Brown (Machinists), G. M. Harrison (Railway Clerks), E. Flore (Hotel and Restaurant Workers), occasionally taking a progressive stand. The balance of the Council ranges from conservatives to extreme reactionaries such as Matthew Woll (Photo Engravers), W. L. Hutcheson (Carpenters), and G. M. Bugnizet (Electrical Workers).

Woll is the leader of the reactionary Council clique. He was long a vice-president of the notorious National Civic Federation (until compelled by labor to resign) and he is now a darling of the National Association of Manufacturers. Woll also has much backing from labor reactionaries entrenched in the leading bodies of various A. F. of L. international unions, one of his special cronies being David Dubinsky of the I.L.G.W.U. The Woll clique is strong and well-organized, and Dubinsky and Woll are now trying to still further strengthen it by bringing John L. Lewis back into the Council.

The Woll group reflect the influence of the most reactionary sections of the employers. Woll, Hutcheson and Bugnizet are Republicans and they are working hand-in-glove with the

attempt of the leaders of the Republican Party to control the Executive Council and thus to drive a wedge between the 7,000,000 A. F. of L. workers and the present Administration. Reactionary influence in the Council manifests itself in many policies, of which the following are some of the most important:

The Executive Council, while subscribing in general to American foreign policy, nevertheless keeps up a harmful barrage of opposition to it on specific questions. Thus it has given (up to this time) no general endorsement of the Crimean Conference, but instead has joined in with the reactionary attack upon the decision on the Polish question. Its leaders also constantly assail our Soviet ally, one of their latest assaults being to denounce the London World Trade Union Conference as a Soviet plot to establish world domination over the labor movement. They likewise condemn the demand of the Russians for reparations in kind from Germany as an attempt to enslave the German working class.

More and more, too, under the pressure of the Woll group of hard-boiled reactionaries, the Executive Council follows a line of carping criticism against the Roosevelt policies. Woll, Meany, etc., are trying to force the A. F. of L. into a position of direct opposition to the Administration, with their charges that it is trying to enchain labor through national service legislation, their constant belly-aching about necessary wartime economic controls, their bitter feud against the National War Labor Board, their demands for a radical revision of the Wagner Act, etc. This endless firing into the Roosevelt policies plays directly into the hands of the Hoover-Dewey-Vandenberg opposition and makes much more difficult the prosecution of the war and the realization of the Crimean decisions.

Generally, the A. F. of L. has lived up to its no-strike pledge, but now the Council is showing signs of yielding to the strike agitation of such elements as John L. Lewis, Walter Reuther, Emil Rieve, and the Trotskyites. Thus, the Council failed to place as a condition for Lewis' return to the Federation an endorsement of labor's wartime no-strike pledge, although

Lewis was threatening to tie up the war industries of the country by a national coal strike.

The Executive Council has also formally endorsed the Roosevelt 60,000,000 job plan, but actually the speeches of Woll, Meany and other leaders of the reactionary bloc sound more like those of the heads of the N.A.M., what with their eternal complaints against Government "regimentation," their soft-pedalling of the necessity for Government works to supplement private industry in the post-war, etc. All of which amounts to serious obstruction of the Administration's vital program of post-war economic reconstruction.

On the burning question of Negro rights, which is so essential to national unity, the Executive Council has indeed a sorry record. It is a disgrace to the labor movement that a number of A. F. of L. unions discriminate against Negro workers, and also the way the Council refuses to discipline such organizations. One of the greatest achievements of the C.I.O., which the Executive Council would do well to pattern after, is the splendid way it is breaking down Jim Crow practices in the labor movement, in industry, and throughout our social life.

Another grave shortcoming of the Executive Council is in the matter of working class political action, which is so vital to the whole aspirations of our people. The political bankruptcy of the Council was exhibited graphically during the recent Presidential elections, when that body (doing exactly what the Dewey forces wished), refused to endorse Roosevelt for President and also supported many of the worst reactionaries as candidates for Congress, including Fish, Maas, Danner, Day, Nye, Davis, etc. Fortunately, however, the rank and file and the lower officialdom of the A. F. of L. rebelled against this outrageous policy. At least three-fourths of the State federations and city councils, as well as many international unions, disregarding the Executive Council, openly endorsed Roosevelt and condemned the Council's list of reactionary Congressional candidates. This firm stand of the A. F. of L. membership was a big, if not decisive, factor in preventing

the disaster of a Dewey election victory.

The position of the Executive Council, dictated by its reactionary wing, on the vital question of labor unity is also highly detrimental to the interests of the workers and the nation. Many A. F. of L. leaders still do not recognize the fact that the C.I.O. unions are firmly established, and these reactionaries are still dreaming of eventually dividing the industrial unions among the A. F. of L. crafts, especially at the conclusion of the war. This narrow conception was behind William Green's cynical rejection of Philip Murray's recent statesmanlike offer of joint collaboration between the C.I.O. and A. F. of L. to secure the adoption of progressive legislation in the present Congress. Mr. Murray's proposal expressed the deepest interests of the workers and would have constituted a long step towards organic trade union unity; Mr. Green's refusal was the action of an irresponsible reactionary, and it tended to perpetrate the present harmful split in the ranks of organized labor.

Another reactionary policy of great potential danger is the Executive Council's incredibly stupid stand on the question of international trade union unity. At London, as we have seen, the workers of the world, 60,000,000 strong, came together and launched a new international federation of labor, with which to help achieve the present great military, economic, political and social objectives of the democratic peoples of the world. But the A. F. of L. refused to attend the Conference, being the only important labor organization in the world that was absent. And the reasons? Green, Woll, Dubinsky, et al, claim that the Russian unions are not genuine labor organizations, that the A. F. of L. cannot recognize on an international scale the C.I.O. and the Railroad Brotherhoods, and that the new world labor movement, besides being "a Communist plot," is also a dual organization to the almost forgotten International Federation of Trade Unions (which organization, by the way, has become a part of the new world movement). On such absurd grounds does the A. F. of L. Executive Council undertake to isolate the A. F. of L. from

the workers of the world, to split the international labor movement, and thus to hinder the application of the whole program of the United Nations.

The foregoing harmful policies, autocratically established by the Executive Council, are contrary to the will of the mass of A. F. of L. members, who, if they had an opportunity to vote on them, would, like the C.I.O. members, reject them and support policies of loyal backing to the United Nations, all-out support to the present Administration, a square break for Negro workers, strict observance of the no-strike pledge, full endorsement of the Roosevelt 60,000,000 jobs plan, joint political action with the C.I.O., and A. F. of L. affiliation to the new world federation of labor.

The Democratization of the A. F. of L.

Reactionary leadership in the Executive Council tends to paralyze the A. F. of L. and to prevent it from expressing its potentially great progressive strength. This is a menace to labor's interests, to the Roosevelt policies and, therewith also to the program of the whole United Nations. The matter of democratizing the A. F. of L. is, consequently, a question not only of national, but of international importance.

Misleadership in the A. F. of L. has been with us for many years and the working class has paid dearly for it. Thus, to take only one example, because the A. F. of L. top leaders, through their ultra-conservative policies, delayed the organization of the basic industries for a full 20 years, the employers in these industries were enabled to sweat many additional billions in profits out of the hides of the workers. And so it has been with many other issues upon which the A. F. of L. took a reactionary stand. All this was bad enough while it was still affecting only our own labor movement, but now, when A. F. of L. misleadership develops into a serious threat against the program of the United Nations, then it becomes high time to do something to cure the evil.

The main thing necessary in this respect is for the lower organizations and leaders of the A. F. of L. to assert their

democratic will. They should speak out clearly on the big political issues of the day. They ought to give ringing endorsement to United Nations policy, such as the Crimea Conference; and they should back up the present Administration wholeheartedly, whether the Executive Council does or not. As regards joint political action with the C.I.O., they should just go ahead and practice it, even as they did, with such good results during the recent Presidential elections, establishing necessary committees and carrying on political activities of all sorts, regardless of the attitude of the Woll clique now dominating the Executive Council. The A. F. of L. constitution definitely permits this political autonomy. In the matter of the new world federation of labor, the A. F. of L. unions should make a categoric demand that the Executive Council abandon its ridiculous isolationist position and link its forces with the rest of world organized labor.

Such intensified democratic activity by the lower bodies in the A. F. of L. would shake up the Executive Council, stiffen the backbone of the progressives in the Council, and begin to get some satisfactory results. It is necessary also to begin to send progressive delegates into the A. F. of L. conventions, men and women who will boldly speak out and criticize wrong policies of the Executive Council. As it is now, the Conventions are composed almost exclusively of high union officials who rarely venture to criticize the Woll clique. It is necessary to put an end to situations as, in the Presidential elections, when the Executive Council flagrantly violated the will and interests of the membership, yet not one delegate in the convention spoke a word in criticism; or where, in the same convention, virtually the entire body of delegates, according to President Lindeloff, head of the Painters International Union, were in favor of sending representatives to the World Trade Union Conference in London, but not one delegate declared for it, because the reactionary Council was opposed.

Not only are a few live delegates needed in the A. F. of L. conventions to jostle the dry bones there, but it is also indeed about time that new, progressive figures were elected into the

Executive Council itself. It is a disgrace, as well as a grave injury to the whole labor movement to have such men as Matthew Woll and W. L. Hutcheson elected from year to year to the Executive Council. And to make it worse, they are elected unanimously.

A strong democratic wind is now blowing throughout the world's labor movement. This was especially manifest at the London trade union conference, where, with 60,000,000 organized workers behind them, the delegates brushed aside those dry-as-dust, conservative and reactionary labor bureaucrats who tried to prevent the crystallization of this great world movement. The A. F. of L. leadership in our country will not escape the effects of this new progressive labor spirit. For the A. F. of L. members, like their brothers and sisters in the C.I.O., are full of the new progressivism. Nor will it be long before their strong democratic trend will register itself in drastic improvements in A. F. of L. upper circles. The grave problems confronting our nation and the world imperatively demand a better, more progressive, more democratic leadership in the A. F. of L. Executive Council. To bring this about is one of the major tasks of the whole labor movement. The present A. F. of L. leaders, Earl Browder recently characterized as "senile and bankrupt." There is no place for policies and leadership of the Woll stripe in the great A. F. of L., with its 7,000,000 members.

Forward to Victory, Peace, Democracy and Prosperity

The peoples of the world now confront the greatest opportunity in all their long and stormy struggle to wipe out tyranny, to establish permanent peace, to strengthen democracy and to lay the basis for mass prosperity. These great goals *must* be achieved, as the alternative to them would be chaos and another world bloodbath.

In the fight for a new and better world, the United States, with its huge wealth and great industries, must play a decisive role. Along with its major allies, the U.S.S.R., Great Britain, China and France, as well as the rest of the United Nations,

it has to exert all its tremendous strength for the realization of the historic program laid down at the conferences in Moscow, Teheran and Crimea.

The Roosevelt policies point generally in the right direction to achieve these goals. The gravest danger the Administration confronts is that, because of the powerful opposition it has to face, it may be pushed off the correct path or be so slowed down that it will be unable to adopt or to carry through the basic decisions necessary for the success of the United Nations program.

This danger makes it imperative that American organized labor—all sections of it, A. F. of L., C.I.O., Railroad Brotherhoods, United Mine Workers—should rise to the heights of its historical opportunities and responsibilities. It must unite all its great forces, strengthen its leadership and policies, and by aggressive political action see to it that the present administration has the full backing and constructive strength of the gigantic masses of American labor and its allies. If this is done, there can be no doubt but that our country will play a progressive and successful world role and that harassed humanity, at the end of this war, will enter upon a period of unequalled progress.



NOTE .

Since the foregoing speech was made, our great President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, has died and been succeeded in office by Harry S. Truman, the new President. Mr. Truman has pledged himself to carry out loyally the policies supported by the late President Roosevelt. To this end he should receive the active backing of organized labor. The death of Mr.

Roosevelt is being seized upon by reactionaries as an opportunity to increase their activities. Which makes it all the more necessary for organized labor to be strong, vigilant and active along the lines presented above.

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